Lateral

Journal of the Cultural Studies Association

“Whose house? Our House!”: Streaming Revolution During the US Capitol Riot

by James N. Gilmore, Madeline Hamer, Valerie Erazo and Patrick Hayes | Issue 12.2 (Fall 2023)

ABSTRACT This article analyzes videos shared during the United States Capitol riot on January 6, 2021, where supporters of then-President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol Building in an attempt to disrupt the certification of Joseph Biden’s presidential victory. We analyzed videos distributed on Facebook, Twitter, Parler, Snapchat, DLive, Twitch, and Periscope to examine how participants structured a narrative of their actions as a form of political revolution. We assess how these videos draw on affective configurations to demonstrate the ways that cultivation of affect helps to drive far-right dissent, and we assess the role of media technologies in recording and sharing those affects across networked publics.

KEYWORDS Capitol riot, affect, dissent, livestreaming, riot, social media

This article uses an archive of videos distributed across seven different social media platforms throughout January 6, 2021 to demonstrate how the participants in the United States Capitol riot were using their mobile phones, wearable cameras, and associated digital platforms to produce an aesthetic that aimed to narrativize their actions as patriotic and historically connected to what they perceived as founding national principles of protest against the state.[1] This article draws from cultural studies’ use of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s “assemblage” to consider the complex, ever-multiplying forces contributing to the production of the Capitol riot and does so through a focus on the documents

videographers recorded and distributed online.[2] In doing so, we demonstrate how particular aesthetic forms, including selfies and crowd shots, are repeatedly used as part of the production of affective narratives of collective action and political revolution.

The initial research period for this study was January 2021 through May 2021. Several weeks after the riot took place, we located an archive of social media files which had been scraped and stored by a team of anonymous data hoarders. Our method section details how we approached this data set and how we analyzed it, but our understanding of the Capitol riot emerged conterminously with the rest of the United States and the world. As we were writing the initial draft of this manuscript, Donald Trump was being impeached in the US Congress for inciting violence. In the time between the article's completion and its publication, the January 6 Committee of the US Congress presented publicly its findings from the day, many participants in the riot have been arrested and convicted on charges including sedition, and a complex set of still and moving images have emerged as representational of this event.[3] An inherent limitation of this article is its attempt to write about a historical moment in its immediate aftermath, but this analysis should be seen as existing independently from public testimony like that in the January 6 Committee hearings, although readers of this article will undoubtedly and necessarily put them—as well as other research about the Capitol riot which has flourished in the years between this article's initial research period and its publication—in conversation with this research.[4]

This article proceeds first with a section on contextualizing the Capitol riot and reiterating its importance as an event, as well as how we use assemblage as a means of contextualizing and analyzing the event. We then situate the Capitol riot within existing research on far-right political movements and the development of networked public spheres, drawing from literature on the intersections of protest culture and social media as well as the use of affect theory to study Trumpism. From there, we detail our interpretive method and analyze representative

examples from the Capitol riot across an array of platforms to demonstrate how participants narrativized populist-nationalist affects through their shared videos. We conclude by considering what these examples might indicate about the importance of these aesthetics and narratives for studying the broader contexts of far-right political-cultural practice.

Contextualizing the Capitol Riot

On January 6, 2021, supporters of then-president Donald Trump marched on the United States Capitol Building to disrupt the certification of Joseph Biden's presidential election victory. Stoked by two months of claims from Trump and his allies that the election had been stolen and rigged with no evidence to support such claims, the so-called "Stop the Steal" movement brought thousands of people to Washington, DC in support of the baseless belief that Trump should rightfully remain president.[5] On right-wing social media platform Parler, advertisements and videos supporting the event called it "the biggest event in Washington DC history" and called on participants to "Fight for Trump. Save America. Save the World."[6] Following speeches from political surrogates and from Trump himself, who directed individuals to march to the Capitol and "fight like hell, and if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore," the demonstrators breached Capitol barricades, fought with police officers, and broke into the building, forcing the evacuation of Congress for hours.[7] In all, five deaths were attributed to the event, which we call—borrowing from mainstream news framing—the Capitol riot.

Trump's speech became the subject of an impeachment proceeding against him, where members of the US Congress debated whether it amounted to incitement of violence, ultimately voting to acquit him of this charge.[8] However, the language Trump uses—not only encouraging supporters to "fight," but also claiming their country is at stake of vanishing—explicitly invokes a form of populist nationalism

that was central to his candidacy and his political agenda throughout his presidential term.[9] Trump's generation of affect (particularly forms of grievance), and his consolidation of authority in his own figure, are emblematic of how he has presented himself as a leader of various "wronged" demographics, an elitist outsider capable of returning America to a purposefully vague "greatness" "again." This populism is discussed in more detail below. The Capitol riot brought together many of the forces that pervaded US political culture during Trump's presidency, which Jeppesen, Hoechsmann, and ulthiin have characterized as a "flashpoint moment."[10] From its fomentation on social networking sites and message boards (including Trump's Twitter account), to its connection to the proliferation of conspiratorial thought (e.g., the QAnon movement),[11] to its spread through an ongoing delegitimation of expertise and research which Lawrence Grossberg has called the "crises of knowledge,"[12] the Capitol riot crystallizes an ongoing assemblage on the American right.[13] Paul Smith has characterized this as a dialectic constitution between "primitive" and "progressive" at the core of how the United States has defined itself.[14] Importantly, the participants in the Capitol riot are not just a scattershot set of disparate elements of the far right, conspiracy theorists, or members of the Tea Party or other established far-right political organizations. They also include members of militias and paramilitary groups, small business owners, trade workers, and other members of the working classes. This assemblage resists easy classification. We draw "assemblage" from the work of Deleuze and Guattari—and the take-up of this theory in cultural studies through scholars like Lawrence Grossberg, J. Macgregor Wise, and Jennifer Daryl Slack. In cultural studies, "an assemblage is a particular constellation of articulations that selects, draws together, stakes out, and envelops a territory that exhibits some tenacity and effectivity."[15] For our purposes, then, assemblage describes the many connecting points across participant identities, political groups, ideologies, media technologies, and the like which have been drawn together to produce "the Capitol riot" as an event.

This article analyzes how participants in the Capitol riot recorded and shared video content on social networking, live-streaming, and messaging applications as one means of supporting the narrative that the Capitol riot was an expression of Trump's populist nationalism. Through these videos, we trace the participants' patchwork attempts at producing a revolutionary aesthetic, a means of presenting oneself as a populist insurrectionist through costumes, speech, and filming styles in an attempt to legitimize and narrativize the Capitol riot through purposefully vague conceptions of "the people" and "the country." The participants whose videos we analyzed were not only interested in particular political outcomes; they were also interested in producing affective media that consciously drew on the affordances of smartphones and online networks to produce and distribute representations of political revolution across a constellation of platforms.[16] In other words, these participants are cultural producers working to generate affective media. While they have various levels of intent, organization, and sophistication, the analysis below demonstrates they valued the act of using social media platforms to distribute videos to build affect and narrative coherence around the Capitol riot. Far-right groups use online platforms as part of political practice;[17] participants use camera technologies to build narratives during moments of violent dissent. Our analysis of how these videos produce an aesthetic builds on other analysis of content shared during protest movements.[18]

"We are Trump": Affects and Aesthetics of Revolution

The Capitol riot is part of a wider assemblage of far-right political participation, one which draws on and connects to particular understandings of US history, to populist politics, to religion, to sport, and even to fandom more broadly. Researchers on far-right and reactionary politics have examined how message boards like 4chan,[19] overtly white nationalist sites like Stormfront,[20] Reddit

boards like r/The_Donald (which promoted right-wing extremist content related to Donald Trump),[21] and video sites like YouTube[22] participate in manipulation and disinformation which may help normalize extremist ideologies.[23] Each platform has been used for varying purposes, and studies of protest cultures over the last decade have comparatively sketched how practices evolve and iterate on different platforms.[24] Twitter's mode of hashtag activism,[25] for instance, differs from how conspiratorial thinking emerges through trolling on 4chan.[26]

Zeynep Tufekci has called these—in relation to the protests in Tunisia and Egypt in the late 2000s and early 2010s—networked public spheres,[27] an iteration of Habermas's history of the emergence of "public spheres," or semi-public spaces like *salons* where members of political and socioeconomic groups could come together and discuss prevailing issues.[28] For Tufekci, digital public spheres act as imagined communities, drawing together people who have likely never met in solidarity over ideological commitments.[29] Platforms ranging from Facebook to Parler to 4chan coordinate actions in physical spaces.[30] During protest events like the Capitol riot, these spheres can act as "spreadable media" where shared video content forms the basis of how these events are learned about and understood.[31] In engaging networked public spheres, participants leverage recording technology as a means of "representing reality" not only in the sense of the documentary image's indexical relationship to what has happened in front of the camera lens, but also in the presentation of a reality that baselessly casts the US Congress as a treasonous body needing to be violently reclaimed.[32]

These representations rely on aesthetics. In his vocabulary entry on "aesthetics," Raymond Williams points out that even though the concept is predominantly connected to "social or cultural interpretations" of art, its origins are in "the conditions of sensuous perception," or the production of sense and sensation.[33] Whether based in interpretation or sensation, aesthetics have always had political dimensions. Political aesthetics have become a necessary feature of protest movement analysis.[34] Research traversing (in the United States alone) the Tea

Party,[35] Occupy Wall Street,[36] and Black Lives Matter[37] have all noted the vital role of mobile and internet-connected cameras for crafting artistic and affective understandings of the ideologies underpinning these movements. Thomas A. Ratliff and Lori Hall have argued, for instance, that all protest activity in the US is to some degree aesthetic.[38] Kari Andén-Papadopoulos has noted a global rise in "citizen camera-witnessing" as a way to document dissent and opposition.[39] There is a general recognition that aesthetics play a key role in how protests develop across networked public spheres.

The "Stop the Steal" movement was different from many other protests focused on justice, equity, or policies in that its underlying belief—that large-scale election fraud had occurred across multiple swing states to prevent Donald Trump from being reelected—was never demonstrated with viable evidence. The support it engendered was affective, not logical. Mark Andrejevic has traced what he calls the emergence of "the era of the affective fact" which "endows non-facts with their 'truthiness.'"[40] If one believes Trump should have been elected, in other words, then surely he must have been. Aesthetics participate in the production of affective facts; they help them feel credible and trustworthy.

The "affective fact" connects to some of the ways cultural studies has long insisted on the importance of experience as an affectual means of knowing.[41] Kendall R. Phillips has examined resonances between Trumpism and what Lauren Berlant has described as "the orchestration of public feelings—of the public's feelings, of feelings in public, of politics as a scene of emotional contestation."[42] The Capitol riots draw from emotional, rather than logical, contestations about who deserves to hold political power, and the participants use their cameras as one way to channel and orchestrate their feelings. As Donovan O. Schaefer contends, this "affective configuration" in Trumpism more broadly deals with "the thrust and counterthrust of shame and humiliation, leading to the rhetorical power of white defiance."[43] In building a "culture war battlefield," Schaefer argues Trump mobilizes race-based animus to encourage "revenge" against other political and

cultural groups, such as progressives.[44] It is not hard to see this affective configuration at play in the mobilization of the Capitol riot; rather than feel the electoral defeat, Trump and his acolytes encourage a vengeance against the US Congress itself.

This emphasis on affect may suggest some connections to the so-called "post-truth" moment, where individuals buy into what the political satirist Stephen Colbert once called "truthiness," things that feel true based on one's already-existing affective and ideological disposition to the world.[45] However, as Robert Mejia, Kay Beckermann, and Curtis Sullivan have argued, examining the present moment in terms of a crisis of literacy (media, information, or otherwise) "reproduces the myth that we once lived in an era of unproblematic truth and, consequently, intersects with a neoconservative nostalgia for a post-racial past that never existed," framing the present crises as "an epistemological rupture" than an "ideological continuity."[46] The participants in the Capitol riots evince this continuity through their continued invocation of the historical past: flags from the US Revolution and the US Civil War, chants of "1776" and "We the People" are meant to align these individuals with an ongoing project of dissent against tyranny —overlooking the many ways racial politics in the form of slavery were inextricably intertwined with the founding of the United States as well as the Civil War. They mythologize both themselves and their country's past as part of a narrative built on affective configurations of history, identity, and politics. Beyond hostility, post-truth, and affect, Nadler and Taussig have suggested that "social stigma and exclusion appeared to be the unifying conservative reaction to January 6." This "deep story," as they call it, casts "conservatism as an identity under threat of humiliation, social stigma, and formal exclusion," where conservatism becomes a social identity used to mobilize a variety of individuals and groups.[47] Here, conservative news cultures work to promote and unify this social identity.[48]

It is within this complicated affective configuration that the Stop the Steal movement gained legitimacy. The weeks leading up to the Capitol riot depended

on Trump, his surrogates, and his supporters producing a sense that the election was stolen without providing empirical evidence of these claims. Video content producers on sites like Parler further aestheticized the affect surrounding "Stop the Steal," insisting on the validity of the claims through emotional appeals, conspiratorial thinking, and polarized tribalism.[49] Jessica Baldwin-Philippi has demonstrated that Trump's populist ideology developed particular aesthetic forms during the 2016 presidential election,[50] where supporters construct themselves *as* patriots through nationalist (if not nativist), anti-government, and anti-institutional ideologies.[51] This iteration of populist-nationalism derives in part from the emergence of the Tea Party in the US in 2009, with its focus on grassroots organizing favoring anti-liberal and increasingly far right nationalist candidates.[52] Trump's politics, in other words, suggest the institutions of government do not function in the interests of people, and only he is able to suitably care for Americans; this extends, via the Stop the Steal movement, to endorsing Trump's claims that a certified election was stolen.

Taking all this together, we suggest the videos recorded and transmitted during the US Capitol riot can be understood as an aesthetic expression meant to continue narrativizing Trumpism as a populist and nationalist movement within networked public spheres. The participants in the Capitol riots follow the affective configuration Trump established in his speech: they were fighting for a *version of a country* Trump was supposed to (if not destined to) be leading, and they perceived their own transmissions as constructing and conferring meaning to legitimize a populist, anti-government, and violent mobilization of individuals in the name of securing the nation. In the following sections, we first describe our method for studying these videos before turning to an analysis of our sample.

“This is Our House”: Analyzing the Collective Action of the Capitol Riots

The videos analyzed for this article were accessed through MEGA, a public file sharing archive service, and were initially crowdsourced through the r/DataHoarder group on the website Reddit.[53] The lead user aggregating and storing this collection of still- and moving-image media explicitly identifies its sociological importance and the need to immediately manufacture a storage folder for researchers and the public to access.[54] Data hoarders broadly aspire to archive as much of the Internet as possible for human recollection and research.[55] Through the efforts of these data hoarders, we were able to access videos from sites like Facebook that had been deleted almost immediately due to their violent content. As Terri Lee Harel puts it in a study of Reddit users on January 6, “Rogue archiving has saved what might otherwise be lost to content removals and overnight website closures.”[56] The MEGA folder did not provide identifying metadata, allowing us to treat videos as an anonymous and ostensibly random sample of footage from users we could not (and did not try to) identify. For some livestreams, usernames were displayed both in the stream itself and in visible comments from other users; we omitted those usernames here in the name of anonymization.

From the data in the MEGA folder, we analyzed videos from seven platforms for analysis: three live-streaming platforms (DLive, Twitch, and Periscope), three social networking platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Parler), and one messaging platform (Snapchat). We viewed footage from five DLive users (approximately six hours in length), three Periscope streams (approximately three hours in length), and three Twitch streams (approximately four hours in length). We viewed fifty-eight videos shared through Facebook and the “Facebook Live” feature, which allows users to broadcast a live video to followers or to the larger Facebook community; we viewed fifty videos from Twitter; and we viewed thirty videos from

Parler. We viewed thirty-one Snapchat Stories, short videos of up to ten seconds that disappear after twenty-four hours.[57]

Using crowdsourced data from Reddit forums such as r/DataHoarder does not appear to be a common method in cultural studies or Internet research and is quite different from how sources like Mechanical Turk are used to crowdsource survey research. Because many of these platforms deleted footage from the Capitol riot hours after it began, we could not scrub these platforms for videos when we began research in late January 2021. This access, however, has its limitations, because we fundamentally cannot verify the videos or link them to accounts. Some amount of trust is required that the MEGA folder for videos from Parler are, in fact, coming from Parler. We also do not have metadata such as comments, likes, retweets, timestamps, or other data that could have been obtained from social media analytics platforms. Repositories like MEGA and resources like r/DataHoarder, then, are useful for qualitative researchers who are unable to access relevant materials that may have been deleted for any number of reasons. One potential contribution of this article is to demonstrate the utility of this method of analyzing crowdsourced videos from data hoarders.

We used visual analysis to map both form (how does the videographer use their camera) and content (what is recorded). We made three passes through this material. Each author moved one platform at a time, writing descriptions and verifying co-authors' form and content descriptions. The first pass formed a descriptive layer, in which we summarized content and looked for overall trends in each platform. The second pass formed a comparative layer, in which we assessed similarities and differences across the social networking sites, the live-streaming platforms, and the messaging application. The third pass formed an analytical layer, in which we meaningfully interpreted the form and content of these videos to examine how they embodied the populist-nationalist claims Trump espoused immediately before the Capitol riots. These videos are, on some level, intentional: participants had to take out their phones or mobile cameras,

open preferred platforms and applications, and consciously begin and end their recordings for broadcast. We have not sought to identify participants, as we wished to treat their videos as an anonymous and random sample.

Two major themes emerged in how the participants were drawing on aesthetics to advance narratives about the Capitol riot as they documented it: the riot as collective action, and the riot as revolution. In the former, videographers draw on images of the crowd or consciously highlight their place within the crowd to marvel at the amount of people who have assembled for the riot. This also includes strategies of continuously moving a smartphone camera through space and focusing on individual instances of violence, such as the shooting of participant Ashli Babbitt. In the latter, participants draw on speech, song, and other modes of communication that directly link the Capitol riot to other moments of revolt in US history, namely the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. This frame underscores the nationalist sentiments motivating many participants, while placing Trump as the leader of the nation and emphasizing the broad role of "the people" as agents of revolution.

In the following section, we discuss the overlapping nature of these two narratives through representative examples. We provide descriptive detail while sketching some of the variety of what participants recorded and shared. Focusing on representative examples allows us to analyze decisions in camera movement or speech from individual videos, but this comes at the cost of providing a holistic account of the more than one hundred videos we viewed. This decision is consistent with textual analysis and visual analysis methods, which often emphasize a representative sample of materials to permit the examination of more detail and nuance.

“It’s 1776, and We the People Will Never Give Up”: The Riot as Revolution

In this section, we focus on how different participants utilized the affordances of different platforms. We focus on formal elements of videos to suggest the framing of crowds—and the videographer’s relationship to the crowd—is part of a representational strategy meant to emphasize scale and grant legitimacy to these actions. Different platforms tended towards different kinds of representation: Snapchat, with its ten-second limit, favored crowd pans, while videos shared through Facebook often include videographers turning cameras around to capture themselves as part of the event. This demonstrates how affordances help to enable the modes of production deemed desirable on different platforms.[58] Jeppesen, Hoechsmann, and ulthiin have called these videos “performance crime, documenting their activities as a crucial component of the riot.”[59]

Two users who shared multiple videos through Facebook—who we have called “Sean” and “Paul”—demonstrate some of the ways videographers used front-facing cameras as part of their documentation strategy during the riots. Sean recorded a series of videos between one and three minutes in length as he moved along the police barricade line. In one, Sean says to police officers variations of “I love you guys,” and “Sorry you guys got to deal with this,” before he also turns to yelling at the officers and cheering on the crowd trying to physically fight the police officers. At the end of this video, Sean turns his camera around to film himself admiring the crowd trying to break the police perimeter, cheerfully shouting “We look good, baby!” Sean makes a number of choices here. He identifies sympathetically with the crowd through his posed smile before telling the officers he “hates” that they have to deal with it, and then tries to expose what he sees as hypocrisy: Congresspersons are criminals, and the crowd (the “people”) support justice. Sean’s desire to play it both ways—to be both pro-cop and anti-cop, to both document the crowd and take “selfies” of himself smiling at

the camera—demonstrates how Facebook's modes of social address are also bound up in performances of political identity. As Siva Vaidhyanathan[60] and Blake Hallinan[61] have respectively charted, this is also characteristic of Facebook itself, with its public ambitions of operating as a space of democratic civilization while simultaneously propagating anti-democratic infrastructural developments.

A contrasting set of videos come from a user we named Paul, who recorded himself storming the Capitol. In these videos, Paul only uses the front-facing camera to record his reactions as he meanders through the Capitol. In one video, he excitedly screams, "We breached the building" repeatedly. He wears a Trump hat styled in camouflage, a paradox in that he is not trying to hide his face but rather to broadcast his participation in the riots. In his next video, Paul walks around somewhat more slowly, out of breath, as he says to no one in particular, "We made it you guys. We made history. This is our house. This is our house." In Paul's final video, he looks off camera and asks, presumably a police officer, "Is that where the senators are at?" To which the officer responds, "I can't let you through, sir." Paul retorts, "We pushed our way through already, sir." Paul's footage—focused on his own desire to perform in a particular way—shows an aimless energy as he wanders the Capitol, taunts a police officer, and cheers into his phone while congratulating those around him. Like Sean's videos, Paul's desire to keep the camera focused on himself makes the recording of his actions—and his explicit invocation of having made history—the act of foregrounding himself in this history. Hess contends selfies act across "the complex relationship of self, space, machine, and network,"[62] which are also connected to modes of self-expression.[63] Here, selfies become a formal means of using mobile cameras to insert oneself into what is portrayed as a historical document, a broadcast of an important moment where one's body is literally foregrounded (in close-up) in relation to the crowd. They isolate the videographer from the crowd while also showing them as important parts of it.

In other videos, particularly those taken outside the Capitol, camera pans—the action of moving cameras to the left or right—are used to frame the large crowd pushing towards the Capitol. This was especially true on Snapchat, where ten-second stories efficiently captured the scope of the scene through pans across the crowd. Most videographers seemed to hold their cell phone above their head, pan left or right to capture the crowd size, and then pull their phone back down. In one story, a videographer appears to be standing on one of the outdoor mezzanines of the Capitol filming the crowd below. As the videographer pans to capture the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the mezzanine, some individuals have phones out and also appear to be recording their own videos. Like the use of selfies above, this is a commemorative mode of recording and sharing, using the Story format to capture what—for the participants—is ostensibly a celebratory moment of collective action.

While the Snapchat stories appear more rushed and amateurish, capturing quick impressions of crowd action, other participants ostensibly viewed themselves as amateur journalists, treating the breach of the Capitol (and the accompanying violence) as something worth chronicling and sharing. Such videos mimic traditional tracking shots—the act of moving a camera through space—which are emblematic of some documentary and news production. The shooting of Ashli Babbitt, a protestor who tried to climb through a broken interior window, serves as an exemplar of this formal strategy, as well as how videographers focused on individual violent moments occurring within the crowd. Babbitt, a thirty-five-year-old woman whose involvement in conspiracies about election fraud were well-documented in mainstream press accounts,[64] used Facebook Live to share her elation as she and others marched towards the Capitol. Babbitt was later shot while standing at the front of a crowded group in a tight hallway; many individuals recorded and shared video of her shooting. Footage on Twitter is blurry and difficult to follow, as videographers struggle to record a visible angle of her bleeding body. Two separate videos from the same Twitter user record Babbitt getting shot and falling back onto the floor, followed by efforts of those around

her to assess her condition and remove her from the hallway. This videographer moves through space to get closer to Babbitt while recording, filming her body while multiple overlapping voices scream for help. In another video, a man yells, "There's an active shooter," beside Babbitt's injured body. In another, a videographer positioned somewhat further from Babbitt's body turns back to onlookers and appears to shout, "They're shooting rounds! They just shot a guy to death over here!" Another video, filmed almost directly behind Babbitt, records her on the floor struggling to breathe and barely moving as those around her try to examine her injury. Babbitt's death, then, is both emblematic of the violence and chaos of the Capitol riots, but also the impulse among participants to document and share as much as they could of that violence, ostensibly in a desire to cover the event from a quasi-journalistic perspective.

This focus on capturing long durations of moving through space is also apparent in the livestreaming platforms DLive, Twitch, and Periscope, where streamers leveraged the ability to recording and broadcast in ways where audiences could not only view, but also interact with content in real time through the chat function in livestreams. A Periscope stream taken near the entrance to the Capitol demonstrates how the ability to move the camera through space captures the complexity of the violence during the riot. In the middle of one stream, for instance, a large cloud of tear gas is thrown from the door, supposedly by police officers, but participants continue to use flag poles to break through the windows. The streamer pans to capture participants yelling "get the fuck out of here" to nearby journalists, who quickly leave the scene, leaving behind their equipment. The streamer moves towards this crowd, recording participants throwing the camera gear (breaking and shattering cameras, stand-up lights, and tripods, while others kick the already broken gear) and one participant shoves an ostensible member of the press to the ground. Towards the end of the livestream, a person off-camera shouts, "we're the news now." The movement through space unites the scenes of one crowd breaking windows and another crowd breaking news equipment, showing multiple ways different pockets of groups were performing

violence against objects and spaces. The Periscope stream becomes “the news,” in that it provides to viewers an embedded, “authentic” presentation of the riot.

Livestreaming provides uninterrupted, lengthy runtimes that allow these actions to be chronicled in their flow, with the videographer sharing these events as they manifest in time and space over a period of several hours. Many livestreaming platforms also allow viewers to add comments in real time. In one DLive stream, for instance, comments from the stream add an additional layer of interfacing the online-offline nodes in this digital public sphere. Some comments included, “fuck the blue line [police officers] they don[’]t have our back;” variations of “this is our house,” and “HAIL TRUMP.” T. L. Taylor has noted how the ability to comment on streams allows viewers and streamers to build parasocial relationships, and here those comments are used to solidify ideological identification, as those watching online can perform through replicating the chants and cheers viewed in the videos.[65] The comments work with the camera movements to affirm the value of what is being recorded and to cultivate the aesthetic dispositions towards what was being broadcast in real time into digital public spheres.

This aesthetic disposition also emphasizes the Capitol riot as an act of revolution. To construct this narrative, participants in the riot mobilized a number of recurring strategies, including flags and costumes (placing “Trump 2020” flags above United States flags on flagpoles carried through crowds, e.g.), revolutionary chants (“Fight for Trump,” e.g.), and a variety of songs (singing the Star-Spangled Banner after taking control of exterior scaffolding, e.g.). In footage from outside the US Capitol—namely that on Facebook, Snapchat, and Periscope—flags are prominently flown above the crowd. Many of these are explicitly tied to Trump, including his 2020 “Keep America Great” campaign flag, a “Trump 2024” flag, variations of “Trump Train,” and “America First,” a nationalist directive which was one of the key principles guiding Trump’s policy agenda. Other flags draw on revolutionary imagery, including the Gadsden flag from 1775, which features a rattlesnake against a yellow background with the sentence “Don’t tread on me”

across the bottom of the flag. The flag had become, since 2009, associated with the Tea Party, a far-right subdivision of the Republican Party, and is here deployed simultaneously with its associations to the US Revolutionary War and to contemporary far-right politics.[66] Similarly, the battle flag of the Confederacy—which has been the central symbol of ongoing debates about its status as a symbol for Southern "heritage," racism, and anti-government ideologies—is also flown in the crowd.[67] Other flags, including "Trump 2020: No More Bullshit," "Stop the Steal" and related derivations, and "thin blue line" flags representing Blue Lives Matter, which is often invoked as a reactionary stance against Black Lives Matter. Where Black Lives Matter calls for police reform or abolition as a means to eliminate police brutality against Black bodies, Blue Lives Matter calls for treating attacks against police officers and first responders as hate crimes.[68]

Participants also wore a variety of Trump merchandise: hoodies, hats, shirts, and other attire emblazoned with "Trump" or "MAGA" are seen in nearly every video we watched across all platforms. Participants also deepened their performance as a patriotic or even heroic one through converting flags into capes, a mode of attire that borrows from superhero semantics to convey heroism.[69] Connecting this costume to the popularity of superheroes, this fashioning of Trump flags as capes signals a sense of extrajudicial authority, "empowering" participants to act above and against legal and legislative structures in the name of supporting Trump's claims to the presidency. Another way to say this is that participants are embracing cosplay, a practice where fans produce and wear costumes based on fictional characters for pleasure and for building shared identity with other fans.[70] The "MAGA costume" briefly sketched here—with its red cap, its multiple flags, and its shirts and hoodies bearing Trump's name and associated slogans—can certainly be interpreted in this way, where the "MAGA Patriot" is its own sort of character that has been created amidst the Trump movement.[71]

A variety of chants throughout the videos repurposed patriotic language. Phrases like "1776," "We the people" (the first phrase in the preamble to the US

Constitution), and “Patriots,” along with crowd chants like “Whose house? Our house” invoke populist claims centering and constructing a version of “the people” which has a right to violently assault the US Congress in the name of securing its own sense of legitimacy.[72] Other chants and cries included “Fight for Trump,” “We are Trump,” and “Hang Mike Pence” (Trump’s vice president), which again draws on language of violence and revolt while focusing the issue around Trump’s persona rather than the interests of the United States as a whole.

One video streamed to Facebook serves as exemplar of this speech. It is recorded approximately fifty feet from the Capitol doors and clearly shows police officers using riot shields to form a barrier and push back the crowd. A woman on a bullhorn on the left side of the frame calls to the crowd, “Everyone, we need gas masks. We need weapons. We need strong, angry patriots to help our boys.” As she says this, one man passes another an aluminum bat; that man brings the bat high above his head and crashes it down onto an officer’s riot shield. Following immediately, another man throws a fire extinguisher at the police officers as the woman on the bullhorn declares, “It’s 1776, and we the people will never give up.” The woman continues to use the bullhorn to rally the crowd around calls for “we the people” to “stand up for ourselves,” during which time shoes, debris, and poles are hurled towards the officers. One individual holds up a wooden board with a long nail taped to it. The violence occurring alongside this speech encapsulates how speakers at the riots encouraged members of the crowd to act violently, framing it as a patriotic duty through an invocation of the declaration of independence against Britain in 1776. This speech and the concurrent attack on officers is representative of larger trends seen throughout all platforms we examined. Participants regularly identify themselves as patriots and congresspersons as traitors. They shout “1776” or “we the people” as part of group chants, and they broadly incorporate this language from the United States’ founding into their actions as a means of justification and support.

Both during the Capitol riot and in the days leading up to it, songs were used to create community cohesion, instill a sense of nationalist pride, and hype supporters to attend the event and amplify its stakes. During the riot, after climbing to the top of outdoor scaffolding, participants performed an impromptu rendition of the US national anthem. The national anthem works here as a binding agent, a means of signifying that this group perceives its actions as patriotic. In another video, a singer performs "Amazing Grace" outside the Capitol Building and somewhat removed from the main crowd, a reminder of the conjunction of Christian nationalism to contemporary far-right politics in the United States.[73]

Conclusion: Revolution and the Crisis of Meaning

Taken together, these videos produce an aesthetic and a narrative about the supposed legitimacy of this insurrection against the United States. The affective dispositions in these videos offer a means of forging solidarity with far-right political practice while attempting to legitimate anti-government narratives.[74] These narratives, which flow between the physical and digital public spheres of dissent, also work to bring other elements into unexpected association and relation, such as particular understandings of US history romanticizing things like the Confederate battle flag alongside practices from fandom like cosplay. These relations are represented in part through mobile phone recordings and digital platform transmission, which help build affective dispositions around violence against the state. These technologies are used, as we have argued throughout, to build narratives about the goal of such dissent: in this case, to emphasize the supposed value of this collective action and to insist on the riot as a political revolution.

While we favored textual analysis to interpret the videos produced on January 6, this interpretation is meant to open towards a contextual understanding of the

role such aesthetics play in broader political crises, such as how (in this instance) populist and conspiratorial ideologies are mobilized to subvert the US democratic process and attack members of the US Congress. These aesthetics and narratives need to be continually traced through the multiplicities and contingencies of complicated assemblages, where different technologies—including mobile cameras and social media platforms—help to enable various forms of cultural-political practice, identity, dissent, and violence. While we have focused on the camera strategies and their connection to the populist-nationalist ideologies driving much of Trump's presidency and his supporters, there is substantially more to be said regarding how these ideologies connect to whiteness, racial animosity, socioeconomic grievances, xenophobia, and other areas of concern which have motivated far right violence in the United States over the last decade. Their relative absence from this article is not meant to suggest these are not important domains for analysis. Rather, our focus on the revolutionary narratives in participant videos during the Capitol riot is meant to provide another layer from which to explore these complicated tendrils of cultural-political identity and practice.

The assemblage of humans, cameras, and platforms this article has charted demonstrates some of the ways aesthetics—as both culturally resonant standards for video production and means of generating affect—are strategies of far-right dissent. Attending to the breadth of this mediation, as we have attempted in analyzing content on seven different platforms, offers a means of mapping the territory of this aesthetic and acknowledging a complex assemblage at play.[75] We want to conclude by reiterating that January 6 is far from an isolated occurrence, but instead must be considered as a conjunctural event: it brought together many different forces, but those forces continue to persist and transform in the wake of the riot. This is an unfolding story about what far-right violence against the state looks like and what kinds of legitimacy it claims, as well as how the production of revolutionary aesthetics exacerbates existing crises in knowledge, affect, and ideology amongst US citizens. To return to Andrejevic,[76] these videographers are

all constructing their own affective facts out of their experiences participating in the Capitol riots, and sending them out through many different social media platforms to help construct networked public spheres that might continue building narratives in favor of violent revolution.Finally, we want to conclude by speculating on the ongoing importance of these videos. While we have analyzed how the videographers represented their actions, and how these representations connect to the generation of affect and narrative through particular aesthetic choices, these videos—and others like them—have publicly circulated in a variety of spaces. As mentioned in the introduction, footage from participants has not only been used to narrativize their collective action as patriotic, but has also been used to surveil, arrest, and prosecute many of these participants. Another narrative that has emerged in the years immediately following the Capitol riot is a legal one, which has described these actions as seditious. As we write this revised postscript following this article's acceptance to Lateral, Donald Trump has been formally indicted on conspiracy to violate civil rights, conspiracy to defraud the government, corrupt obstruction of an official proceeding, and conspiracy to carry out such obstruction.[77] Given how videos from participants have circulated in other legal and investigatory contexts since January 6, it is likely they will continue to play a role in the upcoming legal trial. We hesitate to speculate on what, if any, legal role these videos will have, but their meanings will undoubtedly continue to transform in the years ahead. It may be sufficient to suggest the assemblage we have analyzed throughout this article will continue transforming as it traverses different contexts, especially as these documents of an attempted political revolution continue to be deployed as legal evidence of crimes against the state.

Notes

1. An early version of this paper was presented at the 2021 Association of Internet Researchers conference. ↩

2. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). See also Lawrence Grossberg, "Cultural Studies and Deleuze-Guattari, Part 1: A Polemic on Projects and Possibilities," *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2014), 1–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.814825 < https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.814825> .

3. Some research on January 6 from communication, media, and cultural studies perspectives published in the period this article was under review includes: Caetlin Benson-Allott, "An Urgent Legacy: Television, Liveness, and the January 6 Hearings," *Film Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2022): 93–97, https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2022.76.2.93 < https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2022.76.2.93> ; Erica B. Edwards and Jennifer Esposito, "Popular Culture as an Educative Site Regarding the January 6, 2021 Insurrection: Grappling with Complexity through Intersectional Analyses a Special Issue of *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 22, no. 5 (2022): 435–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086221094285 < https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086221094285> ; Stephen D. Reese and Bin Chen, "Emerging Hybrid Networks of Verification, Accountability, and Institutional Resilience: The Capitol riot and the Work of Open-Source Investigation," *Journal of Communication* 72, no. 6 (2022): 633–646, https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac030 < https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac030> ; Luke Munn, "More than a Mob: Parler as Preparatory Media for the U.S. Capitol Storming," *First Monday* 26, no. 3 (2021): https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i3.11574 < https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i3.11574> .

4. This writing *about the present* should not be confused with Michel Foucault's *history of the present*, which is more concerned with a genealogical construction of the contexts that shape contemporary phenomena. David Garland, "What is a 'History of the Present'? On Foucault's Genealogies and Their Critical Preconditions," *Punishment & Society* 16, no. 4 (2014): 365–84, https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474514541711 < https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474514541711> .

5. Jim Rutenberg, Nick Corasaniti, and Alan Feuer, "Trump's Fraud Claims Died in Court, but the Myth of Stolen Elections Lives On," *New York Times*, December 26, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/26/us/politics/republicans-voter-fraud.html < https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/26/us/politics/republicans-voter-fraud.html> .

6. All social media videos referenced in this article were retrieved from a MEGA storage folder, which was removed in October or November 2023. This storage folder was aggregated by a variety of anonymous data hoarders. The authors accessed this footage freely and were not responsible for any of the footage stored in this folder.

7. Associated Press, "Transcript of Trump's speech at rally before US Capitol riot," *US News and World Report*, January 13, 2021, https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2021-01-13/transcript-of-trumps-speech-at-rally-before-us-capitol-riot < https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2021-01-13/transcript-of-trumps-speech-at-rally-before-us-capitol-riot> .

8. Nicholas Fandos, "Trump Acquitted of Inciting Insurrection, Even as Bipartisan Majority Votes 'Guilty,'" *New York Times*, February 13, 2021,

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/13/us/politics/trump-impeachment.html < https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/13/us/politics/trump-impeachment.html> .

9. The literature review below maps out more fully how Trump's national populism is linked to his authority as a source of affect. For some relevant sources, see Kendall R. Phillips, "'The Safest Hands are Our Own': Cinematic Affect, State Cruelty, and the Election of Donald J. Trump," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018): 85–89; Donovan O. Schaefer, "Whiteness and Civilization: Shame, Race, and the Rhetoric of Donald Trump," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2020): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1435082 < https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1435082> .

10. Sandra Jeppesen, Michael Hoechsmann, iowyth hezel ulthiin, David VanDyke, and Miranda McKee, *The Capitol Riots: Digital Media, Disinformation, and Democracy Under Attack* (New York: Routledge, 2022), p. 3.

11. Matthew Hannah, "QAnon and the information dark age," *First Monday* 26, no. 2 (2021): https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i2.10868 < https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i2.10868> .

12. Lawrence Grossberg, "Tilting at Windmills: A Cynical Assemblage of the Crises of Knowledge," *Cultural Studies* 32, no. 2 (2018): 149–193, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1363261 < https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1363261> .

13. Lawrence Grossberg, *Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).

14. Paul Smith, *Primitive America: The Ideology of Capitalist Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

15. Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, *Culture and Technology: A Primer, 2nd Edition* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), p. 157. This is drawn from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). See also Lawrence Grossberg, "Cultural Studies and Deleuze-Guattari, Part 1."

16. Adrienne Shaw, "Encoding and Decoding Affordances: Stuart Hall and Interactive Media Technologies," *Media, Culture, and Society* 39, no. 4 (2017): 592–602, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717692741 < https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717692741> .

17. Rebecca Lewis, "'This Is What the News Won't Show You': YouTube Creators and the Reactionary Politics of Micro-Celebrity, *Television & New Media* 21, no. 2 (2020): 201–17, https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476419879919 < https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476419879919> ; Julia DeCook, "Trust me, I'm Trolling: Irony and the Alt-Right's Political Aesthetic," *M/C Journal* 23, no. 3 (2020): https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.1655 < https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.1655> .

18. Christina Neumayer and Luca Rossi, "Images of Protest in Social Media: Struggle Over Visibility and Visual Narratives," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 11 (2018): 4298–310, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818770602 < https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818770602> .

19. Thomas Colley and Martin Moore, "The Challenges of Studying 4chan and the Alt-Right: 'Come on in the Water's Fine,'" *New Media & Society* 24, no. 1 (2021): 5–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818770602 < https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818770602> .

20. Stephanie L. Hartzell, "Whiteness Feels Good Here: Interrogating White Nationalist Rhetoric on Stormfront," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (2020): 129–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/14781420.2020.1745858 < https://doi.org/10.1080/14781420.2020.1745858> .

21. Tiana Gaudette, Ryan Scrivens, Garth Davies, and Richard Frank, "Upvoting Extremism: Collective Identity Formation and the Extreme Right on Reddit," *New Media & Society* 23, no. 12 (2020): 3491–508. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820958123 < https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820958123> .

22. Mark Ledwich and Anna Zaitsev, "Algorithmic Extremism: Examining YouTube's Rabbit Hole of Radicalization," *First Monday* 25, no. 3 (2020): https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10419 < https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10419> ; Rebecca Lewis, "'This is What the News Won't Show You.'"

23. Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis, "Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online," *Data & Society*, May 15, 2017, https://datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online < https://datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online> .

24. See, for instance, Merlyna Lim, "Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses: Social Media and Oppositional Movements in Egypt, 2004–2011," *Journal of Communication* 62, no. 2 (2012): 231–48, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01628.x < https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01628.x> .

25. Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles, *#Hashtag Activism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2020).

26. Marc Tuters, Emilija Jokubbbauskaitê, and Daniel Bach, "Post-Truth Protest: How 4chan Cooked Up the Pizzagate Bullshit," *M/C Journal* 21, no. 3 (2018): https://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1422 < https://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1422> .

27. Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

28. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989).

29. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

30. Christina Neumayer and Gitte Stald, "The Mobile Phone in Street Protest: Texting, Tweeting, Tracking, and Tracing," *Mobile Media & Communication* 2, no. 2 (2014): 117–33, https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157913513255 < https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157913513255> .

31. Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

32. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992).

33. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary for Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 32, 31.

34. Pnina Werbner, Martin Webb, and Kathryn Spellman-Poots, eds., *The Political Aesthetics of Global Protest: The Arab Spring and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

35. Tarun Banerjee, "Media, Movements, and Mobilization: Tea Party Protests in the United States, 2009-2010," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change* 36 (2013): 39–75, https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-786X(2013)0000036005 < https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-786X(2013)0000036005> .

36. Kjerstin Thorson, Kevin Driscoll, Brian Ekdale, Stephanie Edgerly, Liana Gamber Thompson, Andrew Shrock, Lana Swartz, Emily K. Vraga, and Chris Wells, "YouTube, Twitter, and the Occupy Movement," *Information, Communication, and Society* 16, no. 3 (2013): 421–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.756051 < https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.756051> .

37. Tara Pixley, "Revealing the Black Female Aesthetic Through Protest Photojournalism," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2020): 222–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2020.1831886 < https://doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2020.1831886> .

38. Thomas A Ratliff and Lori Hall, "Practicing the Art of Dissent: Toward a Typology of Protest Activity in the United States," *Humanity and Society* 38, no. 3 (2014): 268–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597614537796 < https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597614537796> .

39. Kari Andén-Papadopoulos, "Citizen Camera-Witnessing: Embodied Political Dissent in the Age of 'Mediated Mass Self-Communication,'" *New Media & Society* 16, no. 5 (2014): 753–69, 753, https://doi.og/10.1177/1461444813489863 < https://doi.og/10.1177/1461444813489863> .

40. Mark Andrejevic, *Infoglut: How Too Much Information Is Changing the Way We Think and Know* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 47.

41. Gregory Seigworth, “Cultural Studies and Gilles Deleuze,” in *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory*, ed. Gary Hall and Clare Birchall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 116. See also Lawrence Grossberg, “Cultural Studies and Deleuze-Guattari, Part 1,” *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2014): 1–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.814825 < https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.814825> .

42. Kendall R. Phillips, “’The Safest Hands Are Our Own’: Cinematic Affect, State Cruelty, and the Election of Donald J. Trump,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018): 85–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1435082 < https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1435082> . Lauren Berlant, “The Epistemology of State Emotion,” in *Dissent in Dangerous Times*, ed. Austin Sarat (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 47.

43. Donovan O. Schaefer, “Whiteness and Civilization: Shame, Race, and the Rhetoric of Donald Trump,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2020): 1–18, 7.

44. Donovan O. Schaefer, “Whiteness and Civilization,” 9.

45. Barbie Zelizer, ed., *The Changing Faces of Journalism: Tabloidization, Technology, and Truthiness* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

46. Robert Mejia, Kay Beckermann, and Curtis Sullivan, “White Lies: A Racial History of the (Post)Truth,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2018): 109–26, 116, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1456668 < https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1456668> .

47. Anthony Nadler and Doron Taussig, “The Deep Story Beneath the Big Lie,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, August 16, 2023, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-deep-story-beneath-the-big-lie < https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-deep-story-beneath-the-big-lie> .

48. AJ Bauer’s work, in particular, has historicized and expanded considerations of how conservative news performs this cultural function. For instance, see A.J. Bauer, “Conservative News Cultures and the Future of Journalism History,” *American Journalism* 40, no. 3 (2023): 338–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2023.2237398 < https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2023.2237398> .

49. Jack Nicas and Davey Alba, “How Parler, a Chosen App of Trump Fans, Became a Test of Free Speech,” *New York Times*, January 10, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/10/technology/parler-app-trump-free-speech.html < https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/10/technology/parler-app-trump-free-speech.html> .

50. Jessica Baldwin-Philippi, “The Technological Performance of Populism,” *New Media & Society* 21, no. 2 (2019): 376–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818797591 < https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818797591> .

51. Claudia Alvares and Peter Dahlgren, "Populism, Extremism, and Media: Mapping an Uncertain Terrain," *European Journal of Communication* 31, no. 1 (2016): 46–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323115614485 < https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323115614485> .

52. Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

53. Other researchers have appeared to use this same archive as well to analyze January 6, including Edward Chapman, "Crowdsourced Archiving of the January 6 US Capitol Riot Insurrection: An R/datahoarders Case Study," Masters' thesis, Marquette University (2021).

54. "MEGAThread: Archiving the Capitol Riots," Reddit," accessed February 1, 2021, https://www.reddit.com/r/DataHoarder/comments/krx449/megathread_archiving_the_capitol_hill_riots < https://www.reddit.com/r/DataHoarder/comments/krx449/megathread_archiving_the_capitol_hill_riots> .

55. David Rutland, "Digital Hoarders: 'Our Terabytes Are Put to Use for the Betterment of Mankind,'" *ArsTechnica*, April 12, 2020, https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2020/04/digital-hoarders-our-terabytes-are-put-to-use-for-the-betterment-of-mankind < https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2020/04/digital-hoarders-our-terabytes-are-put-to-use-for-the-betterment-of-mankind> .

56. Terri Lee Harel, "Archives in the Making: Documenting the Janaury 6 Capitol Riot on Reddit," *Internet Histories* 6, no. 4 (2022): 391–411, 391, https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2022.2103989 < https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2022.2103989> .

57. While Snapchat Stories are not viewable to most users after twenty-four hours, they are still stored on Snapchat's servers for a period of thirty days before automatically being deleted.

58. Peter Nagy and Gina Neff, "Imagined Affordances: Reconstructing a Keyword for Communication Theory," *Social Media + Society* (July–December 2015): 1–9, https://doi.org/10.1177/200563005115603385 < https://doi.org/10.1177/200563005115603385> .

59. Sandra Jeppesen, Michael Hoechsmann, and iowyth hazel ulthiin, "The Cascading Crises Propelling the Capitol Riots," in *The Capitol Riots: Digital Media, Disinformation, and Democracy Under Assault* edited by Sandra Jeppesen, Michael Hoechsmann, iowyth hazel ulthiin, David VanDyke, and Miranda McKee, 3–24 (New York: Routledge, 2022), 14.

60. Siva Vaidhyanathan, *Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

61. Blake Hallinan, "Civilizing Infrastructure," *Cultural Studies* 35, nos. 4–5 (2021): 707–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2021.1895245 < https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2021.1895245> .

62. Aaron Hess, "The Selfie Assemblage," *International Journal of Communication* 9 (2015): 1629–1646, https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3147/1389 < https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3147/1389> .

63. Jessica Maddox, "Fear and Selfie-Loathing in America: Identifying the Interstices of Othering, Iconoclasm, and the Selfie," *Journal of Popular Culture* 51, no. 1 (2018): 26–49, https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12645 < https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12645> .

64. Peter Jamison, Hannah Natanson, John Woodrow Cox, and Alex Horton, "'The Storm is Here': Ashli Babbitt's Journey from Capital 'Guardian' to Invader," *The Washington Post*, January 10, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/01/09/ashli-babbitt-capitol-shooting-trump-qanon < https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/01/09/ashli-babbitt-capitol-shooting-trump-qanon/> .

65. T .L. Taylor, *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

66. Valeria Sinclair-Chapman, "(De)Constructing Symbols: Charlottesville, the Confederate Flag, and a Case for Disrupting Symbolic Meaning," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6, no. 2 (2018): 316–323, https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1455597 < https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1455597> .

67. Gerald R. Webster and Jonathan I. Leib, "Whose South Is It Anyway? Race and the Confederate Battle Flag in South Carolina," *Political Geography* 20, no. 3 (2001): 271–99, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00065-2 < https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00065-2> ; Logan Strorther, Spencer Piston, and Thomas Ogorzalek, "Pride or Prejudice? Racial Prejudice, Southern Heritage, and White Support for the Confederate Battle Flag," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 14, no. 1 (2017): 295–323, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X17000017 < https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X17000017> .

68. Jarrod Shanahan and Tyler Wall, "'Fight the Reds, Support the Blue': Blue Lives Matter and the US Counter-Subversive Tradition," *Race & Class* 63, no. 1 (2021): 70–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/03063968211010998 < https://doi.org/10.1177/03063968211010998> .

69. Barbara Brownie and Danny M Graydon, *The Superhero Costume: Identity and Disguise in Fact and Fiction* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).

70. Nicolle Lamerichs, "Stranger Than Fiction: Fan Identity in Cosplay," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 7 (2011): https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0246 < https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0246> .

71. For more on costuming during the Capitol riot, see Miranda McKee, "Photographing the Spectacle: Curating a Crisis," in *The Capitol Riots: Digital Media, Disinformation, and Democracy Under Attack*, 95–114.

72. Alec MacGillis, “Inside the Capitol Riot: What the Parler Videos Reveal,” *ProPublica*, January 17, 2021, https://www.propublica.org/article/inside-the-capitol-riot-what-the-parler-videos-reveal < https://www.propublica.org/article/inside-the-capitol-riot-what-the-parler-videos-reveal> . ↩

73. Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). ↩

74. Julia DeCook, “Memes and Symbolic Violence: #proudboys and the Use of Memes for Propaganda and the Construction of Collective Identity,” *Learning, Media and Technology* 43, no. 4 (2018): 485–504, https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2018.1544149 < https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2018.1544149> . ↩

75. Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, *Technology and Culture: A Primer*, 2nd ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 2015). ↩

76. Andrejevic, *Infoglut*. ↩

77. Charlie Savage, “Here Are the Charges Trump Faces in the Jan. 6 Case,” *The New York Times*, August 1, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/01/us/politics/trump-indictment-charges-jan-6.html < https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/01/us/politics/trump-indictment-charges-jan-6.html> . ↩

Author Information

James N. Gilmore

James N. Gilmore is an Assistant Professor of Media and Technology Studies in Clemson University's Department of Communication, where he also currently serves as Graduate Coordinator.

View all of James N. Gilmore's articles.

Madeline Hamer

Madeline Hamer is an undergraduate student at Clemson University.

View all of Madeline Hamer's articles.

Valerie Erazo

Valerie Erazo is an undergraduate student at Clemson University.

View all of Valerie Erazo's articles.

Patrick Hayes

Patrick Hayes is an undergraduate student at Clemson University.

View all of Patrick Hayes's articles.

Article details

James N. Gilmore, Madeline Hamer, Valerie Erazo, and Patrick Hayes, "'Whose house? Our house!': Streaming Revolution During the US Capitol Riot," *Lateral* 12.2 (2023).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L12.2.3

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. Copyright is retained by authors.

Lateral is the peer-reviewed, open access journal of the Cultural Studies Association.

ISSN 2469-4053